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National and Foreign Report

Late Night Algiers Talks Cleared Way

Christopher Finally Displays a Smile

Star Wire Services

ALGIERS — After a day of intense diplomatic exchanges that resolved the central issues of the agreement to free the American hostages in Iran, Deputy Secretary of State Warren M. Christopher, the chief American negotiator, last night initialed the accords.

Officials had worked late into the night translating and readying the documents for the signature.

When he returned from an earlier evening meeting with the Algerian foreign minister, Christopher had smiling broadly for the first time in days but, as usual, he had refused to make any comment.

A small group of reporters witnessed the signing.

Christopher signed three documents, initialing each page. Their contents were not immediately made public.

"This is a very happy day," Christopher said after the signing ceremony.

"At last I can smile," said the envoy who frequently met journalists' questions with silence during the final 12 days of complex negotiations here.

Speaking to Algerian Foreign Minister Mohamed Benyahia during the ceremony, Christopher said, "I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of President Carter and all the people of the United States to thank your government and especially you personally for undertaking the difficult role of intermediary. You and your colleagues have performed this heavy responsibility with great impartiality, discretion and high skill."

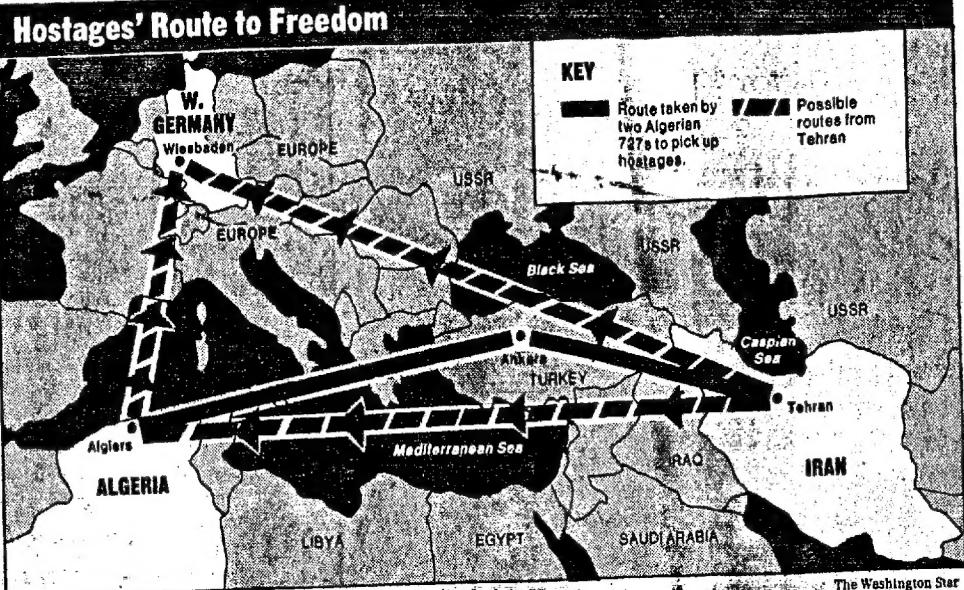
"The American people will always remember this contribution to humanitarian matters by the Algerian people and their leaders," he added.

Asked by reporters if he knew when the hostages would be freed, Christopher replied, "I don't know."

He spoke of "initialing" the documents, but reporters saw him sign his full name on the three separate instruments. It was not immediately clear whether he was used the term "initialing" in the technical sense of a pre-signing or as a synonym for the formal signing.

The official Algerian press agency, reporting the ceremony, also said Christopher "initialed" the documents.

It said the State Department gave the Algerian charge d'affaires in Washington a letter early today signed by President Carter and Sec-



The Washington Star

Hostages' Families Follow Developments Through a Night of Elation and Anxiety

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trying day for her and the families of other hostages, noting that it was a "day of chills and thrills."

Rita Ode, of Sun City, Ariz., wife of hostage Robert C. Ode, 65, a retired career Foreign Service officer in Tehran on special assignment, said "Thank God, it looks like it is all over."

Then taking a more cautious approach, she added "...but until they're in the air and out of Iranian airspace, I'm not going to get excited."

She said she hoped "it does not take too long to get them out of there. It has been a long, painful time. Let's hope it won't be too long before it is all over."

While also expressing the need for caution until the hostages are free, Winona McKeel, of Balch Springs, Texas, mother of Marine Sgt. Johnny McKeel Jr., was trying to suppress her joy, but could not hide her belief that the end was near.

"I'm happy, very happy," she said. "I've tied a fresh, new yellow ribbon around the old oak tree. If it's not raining later today, we will cover this town with yellow ribbons."

She had been up all night awaiting word on the negotiations and said when it started raining, she made up a big pot of coffee and invited all the reporters standing around outside to come in and get dry and have coffee.

"We just sat around and talked. We had a real nice get-together," she said of her new found reporter friends.



LOUISA KENNEDY
"A day of chills and thrills"

from television and the State Department that the agreement had been signed.

They had gathered together for mutual support after months of highs and lows in emotions.

"Thank God we are a close family, and we see each other often. We've been able to give each other a tremendous amount of support," said Ernie Cooke, one of the brothers.

The Cookes, like most of the hostage families are taking the advice of the State Department and making

no final plans for Donald's return to the United States, his brother said they probably will retreat "somewhere away from the news."

Arthur Kupke, father of hostage Frederick Kupke, 32, said he received word from the State Department at 3 a.m. in his home at Francesville, Ind.

"I was expecting it," Kupke said. "I'll wait until they get out of there and then to Washington to meet him. If he wants us to go to Germany, we will, but I think we should give him time to get oriented. I am a little afraid of seeing him after such a long time."

"I'm very glad this happened finally," said Earl Graves of Flagstaff, Ariz., the son of hostage John Graves.

Graves said he had no plans to travel to Germany to meet his father but planned to wait until the captives arrive in Washington.

"It's going to be three or four days at least," he predicted.

Jeff Needham of Bellevue, Neb., brother of hostage Paul Needham, exclaimed, "This is it. It's all over," after the State Department called his family about 4:15 a.m. EST to tell them of the latest developments.

In Pasadena, Calif., the Rev. Earl Lee and his wife, Hazel, said they finally will allow themselves to believe the 443-day ordeal is over.

"I really think it is unbelievable," said Lee, whose son, Gary, was among the captives. "But, yes, I can believe it now. I'm satisfied. I feel great excitement and satisfaction and thankfulness that it is just about over."

"It is over really, but we still want to see Gary on a plane and hear his voice and feel thankful to God."